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Former Los Banos priest Robert Gamel, 67, was sentenced to four years in state prison on Feb. 8 in Merced Superior Court after he pleaded no contest to possessing child pornography.

Former Los Banos priest gets 4 years for child porn

BY THADDEUS MILLER
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The ex-priest of a Los Banos Catholic church who pleaded no contest to possessing child pornography for the second time in two years was sentenced to four years in state prison on Feb. 8 .

Robert Gamel, 67, was sentenced in Merced Superior Court by Judge Jeanne E. Schechter. He'll also be required to register as a sex offender.

Allegations that Gamel was in possession of a nude image of a teenage parishioner first surfaced in August 2014, after the victim's family alerted the Catholic Diocese of Fresno, according to investigators.

Church officials notified police and Gamel was placed on administrative leave from the church before he was formally removed as a priest in December 2014.

The Merced County District Attorney's Office was seeking the maximum sentence of six years and eight months, according to Travis Colby, the deputy district attorney prosecuting the case. He said it's unknown if the teen victim will ever recover from his mental anguish, and the priest abused his position of trust.

Gamel had the image printed on three sheets of paper, according to in-

SEE SENTENCE, 6A

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THESE LOS BANOS BROTHERS LEFT HIGH SCHOOL TO SERVE IN WW II. NOW THEY HAVE DIPLOMAS

Louie Parreira and his brother, Frank, dropped out of high school to serve in World War II. At the schoool board meeting last week in Los Banos they received their diplomas by Los Banos Unified School District Superintendent Dr. Mark Marshall. Anthony Parreira accepted his father, Frank Parreira's diploma posthumously. The presentation to Louie was a surprise.

Destructive big rodent invading SJ Valley

BY JOSHUA TEHEE
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The California Department of Fish and Wildlife issued a warning this past week about an influx of large, semi-aquatic rodents that have been caught reproducing within the San Joaquin Valley.

Cut to "The Princess Bride."

Nutria (or *Myocastor coypus*) fall somewhere between a beaver and a groundhog and are much larger than a muskrat (up to five times larger, according tot CDFW). They can grow to more than 2 feet long, not counting the 12-inch tail, and up to 20 pounds.

This is a problem because the animal can cause major wildlife destruction – ruining 10 times the vegetation they consume, according to Fish and Wildlife. They also burrow in dikes, levees and road beds, department spokesperson Peter Tira said.

NATIVE TO SOUTH AMERICA, NUTRIA WERE INTRODUCED TO THE STATE IN 1899 FOR THEIR MINKLIKE FUR.

Nutria breed early and often. Females are reproductive at 6 months old, breed year-round and can produce three litters in 13 months. Within a year, one female can have more than 200 offspring, which can disperse as far as 50 miles, according to Fish and Wildlife.

Native to South America, nutria were introduced to the state in 1899 for their minklike fur. Although they were thought to be eradicated from the state in the late 1970s, a colony may have stayed under the radar and only recently re-emerged, according to SF Gate's report.

The discovery of nutria in the area – some 20 male, pregnant female and juvenile nutria have been found since September south of Dos Palos and in western Merced and Stanislaus counties – is so worrisome that the state has put together a response team to eradicate them.

If you spot a nutria, contact the Invasive Species Program online or by phone 866-440-9530.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Nutria are destructive eaters; the 2-foot-long invasive rodent has been found in the San Joaquin Valley.

Teen gets prison sentence in live-streamed fatal crash

BY VIKAAS SHANKER
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Obdulia Sanchez was sentenced on Feb. 8 to six years and four months in prison for gross vehicular manslaughter, DUI and child endangerment stemming from a July 2017 crash in which her 14-year-old sister died.

Sanchez, 18, of Stockton, had captured the crash – and the moments before and after – on live Instagram video that went viral worldwide.

With time she already has spent in jail and with good behavior in prison, Sanchez could be eligible for release on Sept. 21, 2020.

Before Merced County Visiting Judge Ronald Hansen handed down her sentence, Sanchez read an emotional statement expressing remorse, faith in God and wondering why it wasn't her that died.

"I feel like such an idiot," Sanchez said. "Why did God choose me to be the older sister? I can't even do my job right."

ANDREW KUHN akuhn@mercedsun-star.com

Obdulia Sanchez, 18, of Stockton, cries as she turns to look at family members as they address Judge Ronald W. Hansen during a sentencing hearing in the Merced County Superior Courthouse in Merced on Feb. 8. Sanchez was sentenced to six years and four months in prison for a DUI car crash that killed her 14-year-old sister Jacqueline Sanchez in July 2017.

The length of her prison sentence is a midpoint between what Merced County Deputy District Attorney Thomas Min, and Sanchez's attorney, Merced County Deputy Public Defender Ramnik Samrao, argued for.

Sanchez was driving a white Buick Century on July 21 west on Henry Miller Road – north of Los Banos and east of Highway 140 – when it crashed and rolled over off the south end of the road, police said.

The crash killed Sanchez's 14-year-old sister, Jacqueline Sanchez, and injured her sister's 15-year-old girlfriend, Manuela Ceja.

Sanchez was detained at the scene after she was belligerent due to the death of her sister, reportedly kicking and spitting at medics and police as they responded.

She was arrested after a blood test at Los Banos Memorial Hospital revealed her blood alcohol content was registered at 0.106 about 90 minutes after the crash.

Sanchez pleaded no contest to multiple felony charges on Jan. 24.

SEE FATAL CRASH, 6A

"WHY DID GOD CHOOSE ME TO BE THE OLDER SISTER?

Obdulia Sanchez, in her courtroom statement